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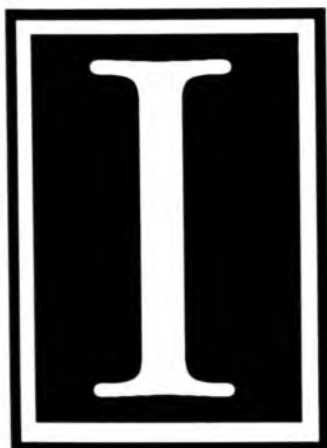
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Feasting in the Good Old Days

BY SHARYL M. SCHATZ



I can still remember the 'good old days' when we used to go to Grandma and Grandpa Cook's farm in Caddo County. There was nothing more than we looked forward to than those long, wonderful visits—unless, of course, it was those times when other relatives were to be there at the same time.

One summer in particular comes to mind. It must have been more than thirty years ago when we were just kids. How exciting was the news that all the relatives would be in that summer—even the 'California Cooks' and the 'Southern Cooks'! Those were the cousins we heard a lot about, but seldom had an opportunity to see.

That big old farmhouse was bustling with activity even before long-distance families began to arrive. There were linens to find and plans for sleeping arrangements to be made. My three brothers and I couldn't understand all the worry; we looked forward to sleeping out on the wrap-around porch with all the other cousins. Nevertheless, Grandma was a worrier when it came to guests in her house.

We waited impatiently for relatives to arrive. Would we recognize who they were? What kinds of cars would they be driving?

We counted on our fingers, and probably our toes, how many children there would be to play with. Uncle Ralph's three children—but they lived

in Caddo County, so we saw them more often; Uncle Leo's family from California; Aunt Pansy's boys. The list went on and on, but we knew everyone's names and felt as though we knew them almost as well as we knew each other.

The parade of cars finally began. Was that Uncle Leo and Aunt Mable? Their car had a California license tag. Mickey and Trudy waved eagerly, but Vicky was a little more reserved.

A small trailer home being pulled in from the South—Uncle Charles and Aunt Darline. (I can still remember being fascinated as a young girl by the pictures of Darline's exquisite wedding dress.)

Excitement mounted as the driveway began to fill up with cars from all over the country. Cousins gleefully chased each other around the yard, stopping occasionally to compare heights or shoe sizes, or just to stop and look at each other.

But the best was yet to come. It seemed that whenever the Cook Clan got together, food was in abundance. (Quite often, it still seems that way!)

Chickens had been readied for the kill, and some of us braver children tried our hands at wringing the necks of the chosen birds, definitely not a skill we carried with us to adulthood. As we eagerly plucked feathers, we could almost taste the fried chicken that Grandma made so well.

As evening time drew closer, aromas of good old farm cooking permeated the air. Fried chicken, mashed potatoes, thick white gravy, corn on the cob, and, of course, those marvelous homemade rolls that Grandma loved to bake. Filtering its way through the other aromas was the distinct aroma of apple pie. From within the depths of the old freezer came Grandma's hidden treasure chest of

wonderfully plump, juicy blackberries to be made into a cobbler. I can almost close my eyes and smell it all now.

How everyone put up with all of us children was beyond me. We kept darting in and out of the kitchen, most assuredly getting into everyone's way. The aunts would only take so much of it, then send us on our way, occasionally hollering for an uncle to come and take charge of us.

Of course, the uncles were so busy playing horseshoes, or sitting idly on the porch enjoying one another's company, that they seldom intervened for too long.

I can almost hear the stories being bandied back and forth—stories of those days when our parents were young. "Do you remember when" stories were always fascinating to me. Maybe because it was hard to imagine my parents as ever having been young.

Finally, at long last, the table was set and food was ready. The grownups sat at the massive old pedestal table in the dining room, while all of the children sat at folding tables or anywhere possible. I didn't care. I would have eaten outside by myself, just as long as I got my share of the feast we had smelled all afternoon.

"More food? How about more chicken?" One or another of the adults would occasionally break the grown-up conversation to check on the children.

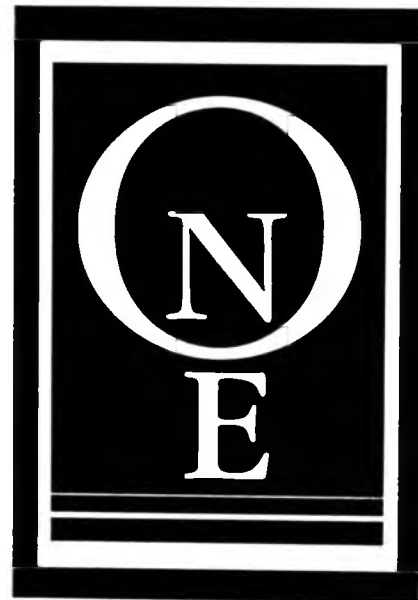
The whole house seemed to buzz with happy conversation. These were, after all, families who seldom got to see each other—once every few years, if that. There was so much to catch up on: job changes, household changes, and, of course, "I can't believe how much your children have grown!"

The meal finished, uncles wandered outside to continue earlier-begun games of horseshoes, or just to sit and relax. Children were given the dubious honor of clearing the table. Aunts crowded into the kitchen under the guise of washing the dishes, but I always thought more talking went on than work.

How many times do we all look back fondly on our childhoods and wish for that carefree, better life? Families were closer, love seemed deeper, and to say the least, food tasted better. The Colonel has nothing on the fried chicken family feasts we had in 'the good old days'. ■

The Feast of Saint David Pendleton Oakerhater

BY ALVIN O. TURNER



of the
most
unusual
festivals

in the state takes place late each summer in western Oklahoma. The unusual elements consist of: tribal ceremonies containing most elements of a typical pow wow combined with traditional Christian symbols; a church's recognition of a man whose